

FOOD DECORATING APPARATUS AND METHOD

This application is based on and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application # 60/240440 filed on October 13, 2000.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention is directed to the field of culinary arts and more specifically, to the field of decoration or enhancement of foodstuffs by application of indicia such as drawings, text and the like. The invention has particular applicability to decorating soft foods, such as newly frosted cookies, cakes or the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

There is a fundamental desire to enhance the physical appearance of foodstuffs for human consumption. Careful control of color, surface texture and physical arrangement of edible objects can enhance the appeal of the foodstuff. Often, artificial colors are added to foodstuffs so that they are more appealing to the eye. For example, a food grade, artificial color may be added to canned fruit to restore colors lost during processing. Sometimes, the surface texture of a food is altered so that the food appears more natural and less processed. Perhaps the most common examples of decorated foods are birthday cakes and holiday cookies. Often, a variety of flavored and/or colored frostings are applied to the

surface of a cake or cookie to not only enhance the flavor of the product, but also to provide a means to improve the appearance of the food. Brightly colored frosting or gels may be applied to the surface of a cake or cookie by means of a special device designed for this purpose. Such devices may take the form of a cloth or flexible plastic tube to which is attached a nozzle. The frosting usually has the consistency of a creamy paste and may be made from ingredients including water, confectioner's sugar, shortening, flavoring, coloring and other ingredients. The frosting is placed into the tube whereby manual application of pressure to the tube causes the frosting to be forced out of the nozzle. If the nozzle tip is carefully guided in close proximity to the surface of the food to be decorated, a continuous stream of frosting may be extruded from the nozzle whereby it is deposited onto the surface of the food. A skilled decorator can create artistic designs which might include crude text and graphics such as "Happy Birthday". Often the food object to be decorated is first covered with a more or less even, relatively thin, layer of a base coating material which itself is usually a frosting of a single color and which serves to smooth out surface variations in the food being coated. The base coating may be chosen to contrast with the graphics which are applied later. It has been customary to decorate cookies for special occasions such as Christmas, Easter or Hanukkah. For families with young children this activity can be especially rewarding since the process of preparing the cookie dough, baking the cookies, and after cooling, decorating the cookies can include the entire family. Since the actual processes of preparing the dough and baking the cookies in an oven involve some skill and are

associated with some hazards, this portion of the cookie-making experience is usually left to the parents or older family members. Decorating the cookies however, often involves the younger members of the household. This should not be surprising since one of the earliest activities many children learn is the act of drawing and "coloring." However, coloring in a coloring book, for example is significantly easier than decorating a cookie with frosting. Often many colors of frosting need to be used to create the desired graphic effect. For example, Christmas cookies may be decorated in the following manner: After the baked cookies are cooled, a base coat of a single color frosting is applied more or less evenly over the entire upper face of the cookie. After this base coat has dried slightly, any number of other colors of frosting may be applied either by means of spreading with a knife or with one of the aforementioned applicator devices. Since the frostings usually contain sugar and shortening they can be very messy. Additionally, the frosting sets with time. That is, water evaporating from the frosting and water which is absorbed by the cookie from the applied frosting, causes the frosting to dry and stiffen, making it difficult to spread. Moreover, if several colors of frosting are to be used to decorate the cookies, an equal number of mixing utensils, containers and applicators may be required to mix, contain and dispense the colored frostings. Furthermore, since a substantial quantity of each frosting color must be available to decorate even a small quantity of cookies, the potential for spills and messes is significant, particularly when young children are involved. Still further, the non-Newtonian nature of confectionery frosting does not promote the ready application of decoration by novices which may yield